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Institutional Violence: Organizational and Psychological Issues in the Military Context

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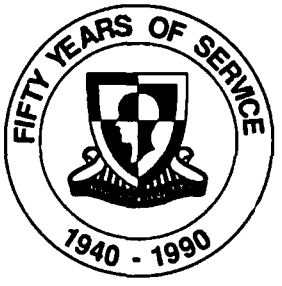

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This final report examines the organizational and psychological dynamics of institutional violence in general and as they apply in the military context. Reviews of the relevant literature led to the following three implications for further research and policy development: 1) civic education promoting military and national awareness; 2) training that promotes habitual performance and builds an "esprit de corps"; and 3) unitization, which is to say, the training and development in stable units.

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Institutional Violence

Organizational and Psychological Issues in the Military Context

I. Introduction

The business of the military is violence. The military must be ready and able to use violence to protect national interests when it is called upon to do so. The effectiveness of the application of military violence hinges, in large measure, on organizational and psychological factors, which is to say, on the proper deployment of properly trained personnel. In what follows, I will examine the organizational and psychological dynamics of institutional violence in general and as they apply in the military context. My aim is to identify the key issues, assess our knowledge about them, and suggest an agenda for research and policy development.

The goals of the military are twofold: (1) to deter potential aggressors and (2) to achieve victory in combat with those who are undeterred. These goals are best achieved when the military is capable of violence that is predictable, controlled, and effective -- in a word, disciplined. Disciplined violence is both awe-inspiring and potent; the image which comes to mind is that of a relentless machine of destruction. Both the prospect and the reality of such violence serve the military's goals.

Paradoxically, efficient or disciplined violence on the part of the military serves also the goal of humaneness. Disciplined violence permits wars to be carried out with a minimum of damage inflicted upon one's enemy; targets are chosen tactically (and hence judiciously), in contrast with the

indiscriminant savaging of people and environments that is the hallmark of an unrestrained war. Disciplined violence also inflicts minimum psychic damage upon one's own personnel; soldiers would be traumatized or brutalized by their own violence were it not securely subsumed within their obligations as agents of the military who follow orders and do jobs rather than simply vent passions. The fusion of efficiency and humaneness is of paramount importance to the military in a democratic society. By its very nature, a democratic society places a high value on life and liberty, and hence seeks to resolve conflicts, including military conflicts, in the least destructive way possible (Johnson, 1981; Phillips, 1984).

There is a considerable body of literature on the generation of violence in service of institutional goals which is of relevance to the military. Some of this literature bears directly on the military itself. For example, there has been much written about the organizational and psychological forces involved in the basic training and, to a lesser extent, combat deployment of soldiers. This literature reminds us that, as Max Hastings (1985:C5) has recently observed, "in war, the army that proves most successful in making its raw recruits into killers possesses an immeasurable advantatage." Yet much remains to be learned about this subject as it applies in the American context. It is Hastings' (1985:C5) view, for example, as well as that of at least some Western professional soldiers, that the American army has never fully "come to terms with the problem of producing massed forces of effective combat infantry."[1]

There is also literature on the generation of more extreme forms of institutional violence than typically occurs in combat (eg, the training and general organizational socialization of torturers and Nazi death-camp officers) as well as less extreme instances of violence by agents of organizations (eg, the use of force by prison guards and police) which may provide insights of relevance to the military context. There is, finally, a body of literature on the general processes relevant to the production of violence in a wide range of organizational contexts, most notably works dealing with how individuals come to obey authority and hence carry out orders or directives to harm others.

Each of these various literatures was assayed to determine the general dynamics of institutional violence (Section II). This general model of institutional violence, in turn, was modified as required to address the special issues raised by military violence, particularly that involving combat infantry soldiers (Sections III-V). Implications for research and policy development comprise the final substantive section of the report (Section VI).

II. General Dynamics of Institutional Violence[2]

Some institutions are in the business of violence. Others are served by violence. Violence is a product of institutional arrangements and is in some sense useful to these institutions. This violence is properly called institutional violence so that it may be distinguished, in terms of its origin, character and

purpose, from personal violence.

In its most clearcut form, institutional violence involves the intentional use of overt violence by agents of an institution in service of institutional goals. This violence is typified in the worst case by the death-camp slaughter of innocents and in the best case by the military fighting a just war. These situations are quite different morally, of course, but in each instance violence is produced and orchestrated by the institution to achieve its ends.

Violence on the order of a holocaust or a war is the result of systematic efforts by institutions to structure situations and to generate dispositions and perceptions which, together, yield "contingent consistency" (see Toch, 1986:1). Generally speaking, institutional arrangements exploit the fact that "we must react to situations as we perceive and interpret them in line with the dispositions we bring to them" (Toch, 1986:10). More specifically, institutional arrangements capitalize on the normal tendency for people to minimize or deny responsibility for their violence; to actively look for ways to mollify their conscience and to make their violence, particularly when it is directed against debased groups, a justified and even laudable activity (Bandura, 1979). So far as is practical and necessary, the links among situations, dispositions, and perceptions -- especially exonerating perceptions -- are prearranged by the institution and rehearsed by its personnel to promote predictable and guilt-free uses of violence.

Institutional violence originates in organizational roles

and activities. Thus institutional violence has comparatively little to do with the passions, predilections, or peculiarities of personality or even personality-situation interaction that account for most personal violence. Though it is true "that individual personalities and the situations people encounter are not wholly divisible" (Toch, 1986:1), the focus of institutional violence is quite explicitly on "violence-relevant situational features" (Toch, 1986:8). Institutional violence conforms to Allport's observation that

> "situational determinants are most important where duties and roles, where tasks and functions, are heavily prescribed. Personality determinants are most important where the task is more free and open and unstructured" (quoted in Toch, 1986:8).

There is an interplay of situation and personality in the production of institutional violence, to be sure, but situational factors generally predominate. Indeed, situational factors are often intentionally organized so as to mute the expression of personality factors. This is seen most clearly in selection and socialization procedures designed to transform personnel from unique and therefore variable <u>individuals</u> in the institution's employ into standard and hence interchangeable <u>agents</u> of that institution.

Emphasis is placed on situational factors -- on the "duties and roles, [and] tasks and functions" to which Allport refers -- in part because they are more readily subject to control and manipulation in the institutional context than are personality factors. Perhaps more to the point, common personal motives for

violence such as jealousy or insecurity, which typically reflect personality dispositions, are weak, absent, or irrelevant in the case of institutional violence. (When standard personal motives are present, they often contaminate the institutional agenda. When, for instance, a soldier is chronically unsure of himself and bullies enemy prisoners to cement his authority, the resulting violence is no so much institutional violence as it is personal violence carried out under the cover of an institutional role.) Generally, the agent of institutional violence holds no grudge against his victim; at least he has no animus against the victim as an individual, though the victim's social group is often viewed in stereotypical and even contemptuous ways. The personal identity, character, and sometimes even the conduct of the victim may be irrelevant. In its pure form, the agent of institutional violence is a servant of organizational goals; his violence is situation-specific and focused upon appropriate "targets" of his institution.

The primary condition of inatitutional violence is some form of authorization to harm others by acts of commission or omission. These authorizations take hold in institutions that are organized in the form of bureaucracies which are isolated from mainstream moral values or at least shielded from regular review and judgment in light of those values. These organizations, moreover, socialize their personnel so as to insulate them from awareness or appreciation of the moral dimensions of their behavior. Together, authorization, bureaucracy, isolation, and insulation foster dehumanization. Dehumanization, in turn, is the

key condition required to engage in or to permit violence "without moral restraint" (Kelman, 1973; Milgram, 1975).

Dehumanization makes both the agents and victims of violence little more than pawns of the institution. As a result, dehumanization neutralizes the normal human sentiments of sympathy or guilt that might interfere with the use of violence. One cannot feel sympathy or guilt over objects, particularly if in one's role one becomes an object as well. Moreover, by freeing people from the constraints of conscience, which after all apply most compellingly among fellow human beings, dehumanization in effect creates motives for violence. Seeing another person as subhuman not only weakens restraints against violence, in other words, but may actively promote violence. As Bandura (1979:228) has noted,

> "People strongly disapprove of cruel behavior and rarely excuse its use when they interact with humanized individuals. By contrast, people seldom condemn punitive conduct and *generate self-disinhibiting justifications for* [violence] when they direct their behavior toward individuals divested of humanness." [emphasis added]

We commonly believe that debased people are "insensitive to maltreatment and influenceable only through the more primitive methods" (Bandura, et. al., 1975:255). The only language such persons "really" understand, we tell ourselves, is violence. In the institutional context, people are most likely to direct violence toward others when they as well as their victims play dehumanized roles. Hence institutional violence, whether carried out in a manner that is cold and impersonal or tinged with

contempt, involves dehumanized or object-object relations. Normal human morality is suspended, and violence becomes a more or less salient personal motive that is incorporated into the routine operation of the institution.

IIA. Situational Constraints

Authorizations to harm are of two types: transcendent and mundane (Kelman, 1973). Transcendent authorizations define people as expendable means to such desired ends as military victory or social control. Transcendent authorizations are often vague prescriptions or slogans that can be endorsed without full awareness of the violence they entail. The call for military victory appeals to patriotism but does not draw attention to the death and destruction inherent in war. In the slogan, "Victory at any Price," for example, the operative word is victory, not price.

Equally vague and elusive are the human targets of these slogans. Enemies are readily seen as subhuman creatures or lifeless abstractions. The violence they suffer is unreal and easily minimized or ignored. To the extent that this violence is recognized at all, it may be seen as deserved. This is most apparent in the case of military enemies. For "only the enemy is seen as <u>really</u> violent," and this violence is apt to be depicted as "innate, incurable, and irrational" (Shulman, 1971:222 & 224). The putative ferocity of the enemy "defines him as subhuman and our own acts, however brutal, as justified" (Shulman, 1971:222). Thus it is that soldiers are enjoined to fight for the

glory of their flag, their country, and their way of life, while the notion that one must maim and kill the enemy, sometimes including women and children, is either overlooked entirely or implicitly justified by classifying the enemy as less than fully human (Kelman, 1973; see generally, Goldman & Segal, 1976).

Moral restraints against violence become an issue when mundane authorizations (eg, specific combat orders) must be acted upon. At this juncture, the disembodied or stereotyped targets of violence are engaged as individuals: specific soldiers or civilians populations must be subjected to violence. Recognition of the humanity of the prospective victims is stressful and might well undermine one's willingness to act in accordance with the dictates of the institution. Dehumanization of both the frontline organizational personnel and those who are harmed by them protects against this possibility. Prominent among the sources of dehumanization are (a) a bureaucratic organizational format, (b) the isolation of the organization, and (c) the insulation of the agents of the institution.

The bureaucracy as an organizational form necessarily entails dehumanization. This type of organization, to quote Weber, "compares with other organizations exactly as does the machine with nonmechanical modes of production" (quoted in Gerth & Mills, 1946:214). The ideal bureaucrat is possessed of complementary virtues. To quote Weber once again, he "conducts his office... [in] a spirit of formalistic impersonality, 'Sine ira et studio,' without hatred or passion, and hence without affection or enthusiasm" (Weber, 1947:340).

Of course, bureaucracies have another face -- a more informal, subcultural side to them (Page, 1946; Blau, 1969). Nevertheless, justifications for institutional violence -- as distinct from motivations for violence -- tend to draw upon the formal side of the organization. Under pressure to act violently or to ignore the violence around them, people take shelter, as it were, behind their official roles (Milgram, 1975; Kelman, 1973). One becomes, in essence, an anonymous member of the institution's "collective instrumentality" (Bandura et. al., 1975:268). Under these conditions, one may feel little or no personal responsibiity for one's actions (Milgram, 1975). Alternatively, one may feel personally responsible for one's conduct but view any guilt or anxiety as a cost of maintaining one's honorable commitments to the institution. Such painful emotions may even serve as badges of courage and validations of one's integrity as a member of the institution's "troops" (see Mantell & Panzarella, 1976). In either case, like one's colleagues, one comes to understand the situation as it is defined by the formal organization. The formal side of the bureaucracy can be accentuated, and indeed can become a self-contained world, when the organization and its personnel are sufficiently isolated from the larger society.

Isolation protects the institution and its personnel from observation and judgment by the larger society, and conveys the illusion that the institution comprises a separate and unaccountable world with its own moral order. The organization becomes, as it were, a situation unto itself; the official view of

the world becomes a compelling "reality". The larger society is excluded from the world of the institution, and the institution is therefore free to develop its own closed world and to pursue its interests with unrestrained efficiency. In its most bald form, the ethical imperative is, "What works is right."

Isolation of the organization is complimented by insulation of organizational personnel. Insulation protects individuals from recognizing the moral implications of their actions. When such implications are considered -- when people come to suspect or believe that what they are doing is either wrong or at least morally problematic -- one's personal morality is deemed secondary to institutional loyalty, that is, to the imperative to maintain one's commitments to proper authorities. In either event, removed from the sobering gaze of society and shielded from the normal dictates of one's personal conscience, violence is changed from the morally objectionable, or at least morally suspect, to the mundane. Violence may even seem quite noble, as when one conceives of one's institution as in a fight against one evil or another. Violence becomes, at bottom, a part of one's job. And though violence may be a difficult part of one's job, it is no longer a morally blameworthy event.

The process that results in the perception of violence as normal and even desirable, as well as the disposition to inflict violence or to permit it to occur, involves the socialization of individuals to fit the organizational enterprise. This process begins with recruitment and training, and is complete when the person sees himself as an agent of an institution that is

essentially beyond human control and accountability. At this juncture, the person is insulated from any meaningful awareness of the moral dimensions of his behavior.

IIB. Situational Socialization

Recruitment and selection focus on people who are likely to conform to the institutional regime and accept the "pejorative stereotyping and indoctrination" (Bandura, 1979:229) essential to carrying out violence on a more or less regular basis. In varying degrees, what might be termed a situational self is cultivated. This situational self is meant to supercede one's regular self when one plays an institutional role. Lifton (1985) refers to this phenomenon as "doubling," to indicate that two selves cohere within the same person. These selves do not normally come into conflict or even competition, however, because they are selectively mobilized by situational forces.

Indices of susceptibility to institutional socialization, and hence the development of situational selves, include the tender age of most recruits, their conservative views of authority, or even their explicit allegiance to a particular ideology or policy. Recruitment is normally followed immediately by training. Training, whether in formal classes or on-the-job, is meant to mold recruits into institutional role incumbents. Generally, a "gradual desensitization process" is at work (Bandura, 1979:229). One's role is taken up in small increments and hence comes to seem quite normal.

Training aims to produce a sense of agency (Milgram, 1975). As a formal role incumbent in the organization, the person has been encouraged, if not directly instructed, to see himself as an instrument of authority who follows directives in the form of orders or procedures that are binding upon him. In the final analysis, the moral justification for any violence carried out under orders or in conformity with procedures is, "I was simply doing my job," whether this job is done in a passive and obedient way or in an active and loyal way.

Bureaucratic institutions emphasize regularity of procedure, if not discipline and order, so that little which is unusual or remarkable ever occurs. Routines discourage personal introspection and criticism of oneself or one's institution; the fact that one's colleagues adhere to these same routines adds to the impression that institutional activities are normal (Kelman, 1973; Milgram, 1975). Moreover, the real nature of one's behavior and its consequences are often disguised by a euphemistic language or jargon. Violence is described in morally neutral terms, as so many "operations" or "encounters" or simply "events" that make up the institution's routine (Kelman, 1973; Milgram, 1975). The person who follows "standard operating procedure" and talks the "lingo" of the institution in effect operates in the moral equivalent of automatic gear. For him, violence becomes an event, its victim a statistic or case, and both are subsumed within organizational routine.

Bureaucratic routines foster a narrowing of moral concern to that of a job well done; they discourage basic questions about

the morality of the institution's activities or invoke the morality of obedience or loyalty to duly constituted authority (Milgram, 1975; Mantell & Panzarella, 1976). The good worker is the efficient and dependable worker, the reliable technician. Technicians do not disrupt institutional routines by faltering in their duties or asking questions, even if they harbor private doubts about the undertaking.

The division of labor in bureaucracies is such that no one takes full responsibility for violence (Milgram, 1975). Policy makers make policy, managers manage, frontline workers act. Each can -- and does -- wash his hands of the other. Each does his job under the presumption that the institutional has an impersonal and unalterable momentum of its own (Milgram, 1975). It is no longer a human institution, subject to control and change. Instead, "the book" must be followed, not changed, whether this is the official rule book or the unofficial (subcultural) rule book. Authority must be obeyed, not questioned; commitments to the institution must be honored at all costs. The person is a good worker or technician and a loyal employee. If there is blame to be allocated, it is the job and not the person that is bad (Hughes, 1958).

III. Institutional Violence and the Military

The ultimate goal of socialization for violence, particularly in the military context, is to produce a

situation-specific set of dehumanized perceptions of oneself, one's tasks, and one's enemies. Such perceptions permit violence of a direct nature to be seen as a job, the work of a military technician. The bomber pilot can, for example, wipe out distant, anonymous masses of humanity by simply pushing a button. He can readily see himself as a military technician with a job to do, his victims so many statistics or sectors of a map. This holds true whenever technologically complex, and especially group- or system-based, weaponry are employed.

As a matter of record, we know that in World War II "Men who had to join together with others to fire weapons (machine gunners, artillery men), displayed no reluctance to fire" (Karsten, 1978:25) or generally press ahead in combat. These soldiers "were drawn into the act by primary-group pressures" to complete their assigned tasks (Karsten, 1978:25). They also performed reliably because they were called upon to do something for which they were well socialized: to operate as combat technicians, carrying out functions that were quite rote and even mechanical.

Soldiers in the field of battle can <u>sometimes</u> see themselves as military technicians carrying out impersonal tasks. Though combat soldiers typically engage in violence that is more direct and visible than that of the bomber pilot or artillery man, they may have only fleeting contact with their victims (lumped together as an anonymous enemy), and are encouraged to see their violence in neutral terms, as a matter of "body counts", "land gains", and "campaigns" (Kelman, 1973; Lifton, 1973). Some

soldiers find it comparatively easy to embrace exonerating perceptions of this sort. Elite units, such as the Marines, the Rangers and the Green Berets, tend to recruit a disproportionate number of people who come to see combat fighting as a job at which they aim to excel. For these men, socialization for their role as soldiers generally proceeds quite smoothly.

Green Beret soldiers, for instance, enter the military with personal dispositions which are highly suited to military life in general and combat in particular. They are generally reared in stable but oppressive homes. In Karsten's words, Green Berets "were disporportionately the children of harsh, narrow-minded, demanding parents who had displayed little affection and had offered few opportunities for independent thought or action. In effect, they were raised in a boot camp atmosphere" (Karsten, 1978:17). As one might expect from persons socialized in such environments, the Green Berets are active, impulsive and highly aggressive when on their own, and yet singularly responsive to the dictates of authority and hence able to restrain, even completely suppress, their aggression on command. In Mantell's (1974:90) words,

> "The Green Berets did not violate social sanctions in structured situations where such behavior was prohibited or where they were under the direct supervison of authority figures. They were and are highly responsive to various expressions of social control and behave in accordance with the required standards. If these standards do not allow for the expression of anger, hostility, and violence, the Green Berets are uncomfortable and perhaps even seem docile and repressed."

Violence is a central feature of their lives. The vast

majority were regularly subjected to corporal punishment during their formative years, often at the hands of both parents. For reasons presumably related to their active, impulsive lifestyles -- which function, in part, to provide an escape from unpleasant homes -- "most of the Green Berets witnessed violent death during their childhood and adolescent years" (Mantell, 1974:98). Contact sports and hunting are common forms of recreation; each is enjoyed because of the challenge and the thrill of violence. In this context, hunting may be a particularly significant avocation. In Mantell's (1974:98) words,

> "The overwhelming majority of Green Berets hunted or trapped during their childhood and adolescent years... The high frequency of hunting and killing in their backgrounds cannot be overlooked... [T]he hunter owns and carries a weapon, stalks his prey and shoots live ammunition into a living creature with the purpose of killing it. The parallels between deer hunting and hunting Viet Cong were <u>explicitly</u> <u>voiced</u> by several of the soldiers..."

Whatever significance one attaches to the popularity of hunting among these men, it is quite clear from Mantell's (1974:98) research that "From earliest childhood, the Green Berets interviewed were accustomed to being both recipients and initiators of violence." The result is that "violence has been and still is a clearly <u>sanctioned</u> and <u>authorized</u> part of life" (Mantell, 1974:98).

Of course, being fascinated by a violent accident, enjoying a good hit on the football field, or savoring the pleasures of the hunt are not the same as intentionally inflicting violence on other men, even if one is told to do by authorities

one is prone to blindly obey. Combat violence is not a passive event like an accident; nor is it a game or a hobby. Fellow human beings are purposefully placed at risk. Violence only becomes a psychologically unitary phenomenon when one sees others in dehumanized terms. If others are objects, their death in combat is no different then their death in a car wreak; they can be pursued and downed like an opposing player or an animal prey.

Significantly, Green Berets typically enter the army with dehumanized views of themselves and others. The striking fact of their interpersonal lives is that they barely have interpersonal lives.

> "[P]eople played an unimportant and peripheral role in their lives. Although they led active social lives and knew many people, they did not mention having had intellectual or emotional ties to anyone. They seemed to perceive themselves as always having been alone in the world...From the time of their earliest childhood memories, there is a record of near total abandonment of their inner lives. It seems as though no one has ever been interested in their feelings. Similarly, they have rarely been interested in the feeling of others. Their relations with most people have been emotionally superficial and utilitarian" (Mantell, 1974:99-100).

For them, others are readily identified as anonymous enemies, as so many objects of strategic calculation to be vanquished in war. As one soldier observed, speaking matter of factly, "I never felt that I killed a man as an individual, you know what I mean, but as the enemy..." (Mantell, 1974:166)

We have, then, a portrait of this elite unit as comprised of men for whom combat killing is a job which one does loyally and well. The testimony of the men themselves on this point is

compelling.

> "It's an impersonal thing. There's nothing in it. Nothing personal in it... You just doing what you're trained to do, what you're supposed to do" (Mantell, 1974:168).
>
> "[A]nything that I do in the Army I do to the best of my ability... And I'm ready to do anything that the Army says I must do. Everything I do is for the Army" (Mantell, 1974:155).
>
> "I had no respect for one of their lives whatsoever. It was -- if he just died, well that was his problem. I had a job to do and if he died in the process, well, that was too bad" (Mantell, 1974:161).

The job of combat, moreover, is no humdrum routine. It is a source of activity and excitement. In the words of the Vietnam veteran,

> "Enjoyed Vietnam. Always something to do, twenty-four hours a day" (Mantell, 1974:168).
>
> "I enjoyed relaxation even on operations. I enjoyed it. No money problems. No women problems. I just felt comfortable there" (Mantell, 1974:168).

Like any job, combat killing can be a source of pride in one's accomplishments. Some men clearly enjoy the challenge of combat killing; others are ambivalent about killing per se, but pride in their combat skills is evident.

> "I got close enough to some [V.C.] to kiss 'em... What was it like? I can't describe it. It's an accomplishment, more or less, stalking a person, stalking something alive, just like going hunting for deer. You're stalking deer, you get in your position, you wait, you wait and finally the deer will come and you get him, and if you snag the deer, you feel -- you feel good. It's the same way. He [my father] would have been proud..." (Mantell, 1974:166).
>
> "I don't enjoy just going out and shooting people. I think everybody enjoys a job he can do well. That's a fact of pride. You can go one step further and say you

> actually enjoy killing people, but we're using a harsh word here. I don't think it's necessary. I did the job. I would do it again. I would do it to the best of my ability" (Mantell, 1974:154).

The claim that combat killing is a job one can be proud of is not a matter of posturing or bravado. This claim is sincerely advanced by soldiers who are quite certain that they killed specific and identifiable enemy soldiers and civilians, often at close range and sometimes in hand-to-hand combat. Even the killing of unarmed persons is "routine and caused them no difficulties... 'no feeling at all'" (Mantell, 1974:157). As they would have it, such killings are all in a day's work when one goes to war.

It is important at this juncture to stress that these men are not psychopaths; psychopaths kill for personal reasons and often without restraint. If these men have any one dominant personality pattern, it is authoritarianism (see Adorno, 1950). They readily subsume their aggression within the dictates of their soldier's role. "Most fundamentally," Mantell (1974:174-5) observed,

> "they saw themselves as professionals, as skilled technicians who were being well paid to perform their tasks... With few exceptions, the Green Berets made little attempt to disguise the fact that they saw themselves as hired guns, paid killers who were not particularly concerned with their employers or their victims. They expressed the kind of preferences about personally desirable working conditions that any employee might consider in choosing an employer."

The Green Berets see themselves, in the formal language of institutional violence, "as legitimized extensions of governmental

authority" (Mantell, 1974:222).

This dehumanized perception of themselves as agents of authority is applied to individuals as well as to the groups or teams in which they work. The group or collectivity is not a source of deep personal attachments for Green Berets but rather is an efficient vehicle for the performance of one's assigned tasks. Relations with one's team members are, like all one's prior relations, utilitarian -- they exist to help get the job done. Here, as elsewhere in their lives,

> "They did not seem to possess the capacity to show sensitivity or to appreciate the feelings of others unless this could be incorporated into a strategic calculation. Either they could not or were not willing to give a genuine response to another person's pain or love" (Mantell, 1974:137).

The men discard sentiment and view themselves as dispensable parts of a machine-team rather than as unique members of a primary group of close buddies. In one soldier's words, "I'm just a cog in the wheel. Nobody knows whether I live or die." (Mantell, 1974:250)

The Green Berets and other elite combat units are the exception rather than the rule among combat infantry soldiers. Institutional justifications for violence -- that one is an authorized agent of the military following duly constituted authority -- rarely provide the average soldier with sufficient motivation to carry out violence. The professional soldier does his job in a competent and workmanlike manner; he may be creative, but that is because he enjoys his work rather than because he is moved by inspiration. The typical soldier, in contrast, is not a military technician; he must be inspired by personal loyalties and

guided by a sense of mission. The general dynamics of institutional violence must be modified to account for the experience of the typical (non-elite) infantry soldier.

The run-of-the-mill infantry soldier is not readily or easily shaped to fit his military role. For him, training for combat is always, at bottom, an artificial exercise with tenuous effects; he learns technical skills but he is by no means a trained killer (see Karsten, 1978). Nor is he generally ready for effective combat performance. Combat "takes place in a wildly unstable physical and emotional environment" (Keegan, 1976:47). For the average soldier, this breeds passivity and sometimes immobility rather than disciplined and enterprising combat performance (Keegan, 1976:47). Almost invariably, combat soldiers feel their own humanity and sense that of their enemies. There is always fear, sometimes panic, and often unpredictable behavior. Primary group ties and immediate situational pressures shape combat behavior more than general training or even specific orders (Keegan, 1976:48). A sense of the larger purpose of the military enterprise -- whether it serves one's society or is at variance with popular sentiment -- can be an essential ingredient of combat morale (Moskos, 1980:82). The book on institutional violence reads well for the elite troops, but for the average combat soldier it must be substantially revised.

There is, in general, a tension between the individual's military role in principle and in practice. The individual's role is an impersonal and dehumanized one; he is a soldier and an authorized agent of the military. His combat duties, too,

reflect a dehumanized mandate; his job is to inflict violence on an anonymous enemy. But to play his role and carry out his duty, the typical combat soldier develops highly personal (humanized) relations with his military primary group and, ideally, his officers. He and his buddies aim to stick together and, under the direction of a competent, respected, and even caring officer, methodically lay waste to the many creatures comprising the enemy. Morale is supposed to underwrite violence. But the very presence of deep personal ties to his buddies keeps him in touch with the tragedy that is war and may, under some conditions, create empathy for the enemy soldier who is trapped in the same nightmare. This makes the regular soldier's job all the more difficult and dangerous.

IV. Primary Groups and Combat Cohesion

It is, I believe, entirely appropriate to speak of the military as a whole using mechanized, dehumanized imagery. As an institution, the military is quite mechanized both in its weaponry and in its higly bureaucratic form of administration. Soldiers who man complex weapons systems can also come to function in mechanical and precise ways. There was once a time when infantry combat soldiers were correctly characterized using the same metaphorical language. Soldiers were encouraged to operate like so many individual machines which would march into battle in formation, approaching the enemy in graduated steps and firing in

unison on command. Those days of rigid discipline and rote performance in the field of combat are long past. As Marshall (1947:22) has noted,

> "The philosophy of discipline has adjusted to changing conditions. As more and more impact has gone into the hitting power of weapons, necessitating ever widening deployments in the forces of battle, the quality of the initiative in the individual has become the most praised of the military virtues."

Soldiers increasingly are being called upon to use their own initiative in carrying out battle plans. "Continuously since the development of the rifle bullet more than a century ago," Janowitz (1959:480-1) tells us, "the social organization of combat units has been altering so as to throw the solitary soldier on his own and his primary group's social and psychological resources." This was first noted in War World I, though the effect of the dispersal of the fighting soldier away from the watchful gaze of field command officers was obscured by the trenches; soldiers in trenches <u>appeared</u> to be under close command, but the opposite was true (see Ashworth, 1968). In World War II, the Korean War, and most recently the Vietnam War, it was evident that "the decision to fire or not to fire rested mainly with dispersed infantrymen, individually and in small primary groups" (Janowitz, 1959:480-1). The implication of this trend is that "the military with its hierarchical structure... must strive contrariwise to develop the broadest <u>decentralization of initiative</u> at the point of contact with the enemy" (Janowitz, 1959:480-1). Significantly, Janowitz (1959:481) concludes that "Any new nuclear weapons systems short of total destruction creates the same

organizational requirements."

Initiative and improvisation, rather than unquestioning obedience, are in fact the stocks-in-trade modern combat soldier. Soldiers using high-technology, systems-based weapons, which are often fired from posts well away from the battlefield, function as bureaucrats in violence. Elite troops in the thick of combat may still retain the impersonal (bureaucratic) attitude of the military professional. But today more than ever, the tactics of the soldier are not that of the bureaucrat following a blueprint for battle.

> "The combat soldier -- regardless of military arm -- when committed to battle is hardly the model of Max Weber's ideal bureaucrat following rigid rules and regulations. In certain respects he is the antithesis of this. He is not detached, routinized, and self-contained; rather his role is one of constant improvisation. Improvisation is the keynote of the individual fighter or combat group, from seeking alternative routes to a specific outpost to the retraining of whole divisions immediately before battle. The impact of battle destroys men, equipment, and organization, which need constantly and continually to be brought back into some form of unity through on-the-spot improvisation. In battle the planned division of labor breaks down" (Janowitz, 1959:481).

The division of combat labor must be spontaneously reconstituted by soldiers who are proactive rather than merely reactive in the combat skills. This requires what might be termed disciplined innovation.

Obeying an order and feeling justified in doing so is one thing. Improvising under life-threatening conditions is quite another. Unlike obedience, even blind obedience, initiative and improvisation cannot be developed on command. In effect, soldiers

are called upon to be enterprising heroes. They are asked to use their wits and risk their lives to win battles or to save their comrades. Sometimes they can do neither, but still are enjoined to "participate in a gallant struggle against impossible odds" (Cockerham, 1979:99). Soldiers need more than institutional justifications for any violent acts they may be authorized to perform. They need compelling human reasons to behave heroically under combat conditions.

Elite troops are professionals who rise to the challenge of combat. But the average soldier sees matters differently. He is not a cool and calculating military technician. His reasons for fighing are not professional; they are, at bottom, sentimental. The typical soldier is not a hired gun; the values he responds to are those of honor, courage, and loyalty. Transcendent authorizations can help to stimulate such sentiments, but these values are not the stuff of slogans for the combat soldier. Rather, these values are tangible qualities of character. How one is seen by one's buddies and perhaps one's superiors defines one's character and provides the motivations for heroic combat behavior.

It is, then, the psychology of the primary group -- those people in one's immediate world whose respect, affection and support one seeks -- that moves ordinary men to act like soldiers in the combat situation. In the general case, a primary group is defined as

> "a constellation of individuals who know one another on a personal basis, who see and treat one another as unique individuals... Such groups are generally small,

> and contacts are frequent and sustained for a considerable time... Members of such groups generally form a strong sense of mutual identification" (Shibutani, 1978:11).

In the military, one's platoon or squad or unit "is the only place where [the person] is known as a specific human being -- something other than a serial number and an entity addressed elsewhere as 'soldier'" (Shibutani, 1978:13). For these men one may well be willing to endure the hardships of combat. There is, as Marshall (1947:153) has noted, an

> "inherent unwillingness of the soldier to risk danger on behalf of men with whom he has no social identity. When a soldier is unknown to the men who are around him he has relatively little reason to fear losing the one thing that he is likely to value more highly than life -- his reputation as a man among other men."

Thus it is that "we may honor the 'Unknown Soldier' [but] it is the 'Known Soldier' who wins battles" (Marshall, 1947:153).

The integrity of the primary group is essential to combat effectiveness. This has long been known in military circles. The observations of Colonel Ardant du Picq, 19th century French combat officer and military theorist, are especially compelling on this score.

> "Four brave men who do not know each other will not dare to attack a lion. Four less brave men, but knowing each other well, sure of their reliability and the consequences of mutual aid, will attack resolutely. There is the science of the organization of armies in a nutshell.
>
> A wise organization ensures that the personnel of combat groups changes as little as possible, so that comrades in peace time manoeuvres shall be comrades in war. From living together, and obeying the same chiefs, from commanding the same men, from sharing fatigue and rest, from cooperation among men who

> quickly understand each other in the execution of war-like movements, may be bred brotherhood, professional knowledge, sentiment, above all unity. The duty of obedience, the right of imposing discipline and the impossibility of escaping from it, would naturally follow" (quoted in George, 1971:295-6).

Research bears out du Picq's observations. Men in primary groups share "a feeling of comradeship and confidence in buddies within the unit" (Chesler, et. al., 1955:596). Because they feel more confident and more competent than men alone or in groups with low morale, men in primary groups are able to meet new situations objectively rather than with a self-defeating "negative mental set" (Chesler, et. al., 1955:596).

The force of du Picq's observations are nowhere better illustrated than in the performance of the Wehrmacht during World War II. Speaking of this notoriously effective and resilient military organization, Shils and Janowitz (1948:281 & 91) observed:

> "a soldier's ability to resist [panic and stand his ground] is a function of the capacity of his immediate primary group (his squad or section) to avoid social disintegration. When the individual's immediate group, and its supporting formation, met his basic organic needs, offered him affection and esteem from both officers and comrades, supplied him with a sense of power and adequately regulated his relations with authority, the element of self-concern in battle, which would lead to disruption of the effective functioning of his primary group, was minimized... When the social conditions were otherwise favorable, the primary bonds of group solidarity were dissovled only under the most extreme circumstances of threat to the individual organism -- in situations where the tactical prospects were utterly hopeless, under devastating artillery and air bombardment, or where the basic food and medical requirements were not being met."

The primary group of the German Wehrmacht soldier was largely

apolitical; the bonds that sustained most of the soldiers were those of comradeship and had little to do with Nazi fanaticism. Primary groups were a source of compelling motivation. "For the German soldier in particular," state Shils and Janowitz (1948:285), "the demands of his group, reinforced by officially prescribed rules, had the effect of an external authority."

A similar psychology of primary-group pressure holds for American soldiers as well. Marshall (1947:42), referring to American combat troops in World War II, states the following:

> "I hold it to be one of the simplest truths of war that the thing which enables an infantry soldier to keep going with his weapons is the near presence or the presumed presence of a comrade. The warmth which derives from human companionship is as essential to his employment of the arms with which he fights as is the finger with which he pulls a trigger or the eye with which he aligns his sights. The other man may be almost behond hailing or seeing distance, but he must be there somewhere within a man's consciousness or the onset of demoralization is almost immediate and very quickly the mind beings to despair or turns to thoughts of escape. In this condition he is no longer a fighting individual, and though he holds to his weapon, it is little better than a club."

It was also Marshall's (1947:139) view that combat leaders must have, if not primary-group relations at least decent human relations with their men. Overall, Marshall (1947:155) concluded that "the relationships within our Army should be based upon intimate understanding between officers and men rather than upon familiarity between them, on self-respect rather than on fear, and above all, on a close uniting comradeship." (Marshall's observations are extensively supported in the seminal research

studies of Stouffer, et. al., 1949.)

Primary groups proved critical to the American Army in the Korean War. There, the "buddy system" formed the foundation upon which primary group relationships within combat units were built. Among the more effective fighting units, notes Little (1964:198), "Everyone was a buddy." Though one man might be another's special buddy, "Buddy choices were private decisions and consequently never threatened the solidarity of the squad or platoon" (Little, 1964:198). In the words of one soldier,

> "You've got to make every man in the squad your buddy to get things done. You've got to get down and work with them and get them to feel that they can depend on you to stick by them. But I can never show that one man is my buddy because a lot of guys may think that I'm a buddy" (Little, 1964:201).

Such perceptions of the buddy relationship as fundamentally a group relationship "tended to unit buddies subjectively with the squad or platoon as an integral unit," which is to say, as the group that "would be required to function in a combat formation" (Little, 1964:201). So integral were these units, in fact, that for the regular GI, "the army began with their buddies and extended little farther than the platoon and company. Beyond these levels the organization was as meaningless as it was complex" (Little, 1964:204).

The comradeship of buddies and their primary groups is easy to romanticize, and there is much about this fellowship of soldiers which is in fact quite selfless and generous, virtues which in the heat of combat are indeed romantic. Still, primary groups do reflect pragmatic and self-interested considerations.

Primary group ties among combat soldiers "arise from immediate life-and-death exigencies" (Moskos, 1980:73). They are "a kind of rudimentary social contract... that is entered into because of advantages to individual self-interest" (Moskos, 1980:73). Such ties are "pragmatic and situational responses... derivative from the very private war each individual is fighting for his own survival" (Moskos, 1980:73). It is certainly true that an individual soldier's "survival is directly related to the support -- moral, physical, and technical -- he can expect from his fellow soldiers" (Moskos, 1980:75). And he "gets such support largely to the degree that he reciprocates it to others" (Moskos, 1980:75). Reciprocity builds genuine human bonds, but it is wise to remember that "Much of the solidarity of combat squads can be understood as an outcome of individual self-interest within a particular situational context" (Moskos, 1980:75).

Nor does the Army wage war on the backs of primary groups alone. As a sad logistical reality, "War mobilization rarely provides the time or the personnel stability necessary to build unit cohesion that is intense enough <u>in itself</u> to sustain the soldier in combat" (Wesbrook, 1980:259). It is also true that, in most modern wars, "casualties would soon change the unit's personnel in any case" (Wesbrook, 1980:259). Stragglers from defeated units generally are poor soldiers (as Marshall has said, they are no longer "Known Soldiers") but they <u>sometimes</u> fight valiently. This phenomenon, known as "the soldier's battle" -- when men fight on as individuals after their unit has been destroyed or effectively align themselves with new units to whom

they are strangers -- "indicates that unit integrity is not a sine qua non to combat effectiveness" (Beaumont & Synder, 1980:33) There must also be ideological commitments -- beliefs and values at issue that are worth dying for.

In fact, commitment to the war effort or the larger society is essential to motivate men in primary groups to engage in combat (Stouffer, et. al., 1949; Brown & Moskos, 1976:9). Primary groups, left to their own devices, generally seek to minimize risk (Little, 1964). Such groups assume the risks of combat -- and often perish -- because larger commitments are at stake, commitments that overshadow immediate self- and group-interests. As Wesbrook (1980:257) has said,

> "the demands of the nation and military organization to fight may conflict with group values and norms, and frequently threaten the self-interest and very existence of the primary group. Under such conditions, if the soldier does not also feel a moral involvement with either the military organization or the nation, he will feel no obligation to comply with their demands and will stop fighting except as a matter of personal or group survival."

In particular, patriotism can inspire primary group members, "strengthening the soldier's will to exert himself under dangerous conditions" (Shils, quoted in George, 1971:304)

Moral involvements with the military or the nation are not abstractions. If nothing else, war draws a man's attention to concrete, tangible realities. For the combat soldier, then, moral involvements must be grounded in specific human experiences and relationships. Thus, patriotism operates as a combat motivation when mediated by suportive contacts with others who share

patriotic values, especially loved ones from larger society.

> "[A]n important motivating force in the combat role was the soldier's relationship to some meaningful element of the larger society, especially his family... It was not enough that he heard about patriotism, the flag, and our way of life in the abstract and general way of indoctrination. He had to hear about them from persons who represented those values to him intimately, persons whose evaluations of his behavior as good or bad were of great significance to him" (Little, 1964:206).

Letters from home are crucial because they represent "the soldier's major contact with the social unit that reinforces his desire to serve faithfully and under great hardship" (Little, 1964:219).

In the immediate military context, ties to one's leaders (a group that includes but is not limited to officers) bind troops to their military roles and obligations. Leaders not only manage the unit in a formal sense (the officer's job). They also define social norms, model and teach military skills and values, and sustain morale; these roles can be played by informal leaders (fellow soldiers) as well as by formal leaders (officers) (Clark, 1969).

Leadership grows out of and shapes the primary group. Leaders are men -- soldiers and officers -- who distinguish themselves for their competence, dedication, and concern for their fellows. They are seen by the rank-and-file soldiers as sources of inspiration, as persons to be respected and emulated. At the center of the Wehrmacht primary group, for example, was a "hard core" of ambitious, eager Nazi ideologues and patriots. They were the informal group leaders, and they set a tone of discipline and

self-sacrifice for the others to follow:

> "The stability and military effectiveness of the [Wehrmacht] military primary group were in large measure a function of the 'hard core,' who approximated about ten to fifteen per cent of the total of enlisted men... These were, on the whole, young men between 24 and 28 years of age who had had a gratifying adolescence in the most rewarding period of National Socialism... The presence of a few such men in the group, zealous, energetic, and unsparing of themselves, provided models for weaker men, and facilitated the process of identification... The fact that the elite SS divisions and paratroop divisions had a larger 'hard core' than other divisions of the army... accounted for their greater fighting effectiveness" (Shils & Janowitz, 1949:286-7).

Ties to formal and informal leaders make men think and feel like soldiers who can then form primary soldier groups with their various buddies. As soldiers with a distinctive ethos and mission and not just a collection of rough-and-ready pals out to stay alive, they can be moved by esprit de corps to perform well in the quintessential soldierly task of combat. Honor, courage, and loyalty mean so much to these "Known Soldiers", and may carry over even after one's military primary group is destroyed, because one's army and one's country are now concrete, pressing concerns that express and embody one's buddies, one's leaders, and those left behind for whom one is ultimately fighting.

The combat soldier, then, must believe that what he is doing is right, both morally (viz his country's authorization of his involvement) and emotionally (viz the support and encouragement of his buddies, leaders, and loved ones). Note that the links among primary group morale, leadership, and combat

performance are crucial in "guerrilla warfare and special warfare action, which require highly motivated, closely knit small groups" (George, 1971:309).

Officer leadership in combat draws upon primary group ties in a paradoxical and painful way. Men follow their officers, in large measure, because they like and admire them; officers, in turn, are inspired by the human qualities of their men. But officers and soldiers never become buddies. There is always a degree of emotional distance separating officers and their men. The combat officer knows that "man is a frail and fallible creature who requires strong leadership and firm discipline in order to behave properly and function effectively" (Dyer, 1985:146). The officer also must balance loyalty to troops he may like and admire -- and want to protect -- and his formal mandate from the Army to use them as material in battle.

> "You've got to keep distant from [your soldiers]. The officer-enlisted man distance helps. This is one of the most painful things, having to withhold sometimes your affection from them, because you know you're going to have to destroy them on occasion. And you do. You use them up: they're material. And part of being a good officer is knowing how much of them you can use up and still get the job done" (infantry officer, World War II, quoted in Dyer, 1985:141).

> "combat leaders must not only brave, tactically and technically competent, and attentive to the needs of their men; they must also keep separate from them [if they are to retain] the moral authority to demand resistance unto death" (Hauser, 1980:193).

To be sure, this emotional distance sometimes breaks down. During extended periods of combat, officers and soldiers live in close proximity and share many common hardships and privations. As a

result, something akin to buddy relations may develop. At this point, officers are less likely to use their authority for ends sought by the military and more likely to ignore or contravene orders in an effort to protect their men (George, 1971). Such units are termed "demoralized," and usually withdrawn from battle so that more balanced authority relations can be maintained (Wesbrook, 1980).

Recently, the aignficance of primary group relations, reinforced by a sense of a larger national mission or purpose, has been confirmed by many of today's military officers. "The central message" given to Fallows (1981:98) by contemporary American military officers, especially those with experience in Vietnam,

> "is that the effectiveness of any military force depends on the creation of a series of human bonds -- among soldiers who risk death for the sake of other men in their unit, between troops and leaders, between the military as a whole and the nation it is supposed to represent. These bonds can be built only by demonstrations of mutual respect and willingness to share hardships; without them, many of these officers say, an army will be eviscerated, no matter how impressive its machinery."

These Vietnam officer veterans know of what they speak. Combat unit cohesion reached new lows in Vietnam, and indeed may have been the major reason that war came to such an ignoble conclusion. In the words of Gabriel and Savage (1978:9), themselves officers with Vietnam combat experience:

> "the performance of the American Army during the Vietnam War indicates a military system which failed to maintain unit cohesion under conditions of combat stress... [T]he army in the field exhibited a low degree of unit cohesion at virtually all levels of command and staff, but principally at the crucial squad, platoon, and company levels... Indeed the Army

> began to border on an undisciplined, ineffective, almost anomic mass of individuals who collectively had no goals and who, individually, sought only to survive the length of their tours... The disintegration of unit cohesion had proceeded to such an extent that by 1972 accommodation with the North Vietnamese was the only realistic alternative to risking an eventual military debacle in the field."

There are a number of explanations for the disintegration of combat troops in Vietnam. Certainly one was the loss of public support for the war. When public support falters, there is inevitably an erosion -- and potentially a collapse -- of military authority.

> "[T]he military authority which would elicit submission [from its soldiers] must be legitimate. It was no accident that mutinies (euphemistically called 'combat refusals') and murders of superiors (called 'fraggings) occurred in the latter days of Army involvement in the Vietnam War. The people of the United States had decided, rightly or wrongly, that the game was not worth the candle, that our forces were fighting a losing (some said wrongful) war and ought therefore to get out. The officers and noncoms who were charged with making their troops continue fighting had a near-hopeless task, for their authority to compel risk of life and limb had lost the legitimacy which national purpose bestows" (Hauser, 1980:189).

Even more critical to the failure of the war in Vietnam, however, were internal military policies which directly undermined morale and cohesion. Beginning in World War II and increasingly during the Korean War, it has been the official military policy to leave units under prolonged combat while rotating out officers and soldiers as individuals. This policy is administratively efficient but it strains primary group ties. More than in any other American war, however, there were in Vietnam what Gabriel and Savage (1978:13) termed "brutally

disruptive rotation policies in which officers were required to serve only six months in front-line units while enlisted men, 'the grunts,' had to serve twelve... The assignment of individual as opposed to unit DEROS dates [Date Estimated Return Overseas], plus the frequent rotation of officers, made it clear that the policy was virtually every man for himself." Even dedicated and self-sacrificing officers found it hard to transcend these disruptive forces:

> "To be sure, some officers tried very hard to identify with their men, but such a course was almost impossible when half of a platoon might be individually scheduled to 'rotate out' within, say, a three-week period, when many of the replacements were inexperienced and confused, and when the 'old-timers' -- those who had been there six months -- had already seen officers change more than once and felt, not without justification, that they knew more about staying alive than their officers" (Gabriel & Savage, 1978:13).

Unfortunately, dedicated officers may have been in the minority in Vietnam. Officer rotation policies were not only a cause of poor leadership but a reflection of what Gabriel and Savage term "careerism" among the officers. Rapid rotations met with little opposition from officers because such a policy allowed officers to "punch" their tickets with combat experience and hence build their careers. Careerism, in turn, promoted an unwillingness to take the time to build unit cohesion -- time spent building cohesion could be "better" spent "punching one's ticket" in some advanced education or training program. Careerism also militated against taking the risks in combat which, though they might cut short one's career, would promote respect for one's leadership and cohesion among the fighting troops.

Too often, Gabriel and Savage maintain, careerist officers operated as managers rather than leaders. "The officer corps had actually come to believe that leadership and management were one and the same thing and that a mastery of the techniques of the latter would suffice to meet the challenges of the former" (Gabriel & Savage, 1978:20). This is quite understandable. The peacetime army is indeed bureaucratic. The reason, in part, is so that men in combat will have routine procedures to fall back upon to introduce at least "some predictability and order to an essentially chaotic situation" on the battlefield (Dyer, 1985:136.) "Yet at the same time," Dyer (1985:136) warns, "officers must never allow themselves to become mere bureaucrats and administrators, or they will be quite useless in combat. It is a difficult balance to maintain, and sometimes -- especially in peacetime -- whole armies can succumb to the managerial delusion." This delusion is especially tragic during war. As Gabriel and Savage (1978:23) make clear, "The officer corps learned the hard way that members of combat units could not be managed to their death." Thus their harsh conclusion: "Among the most important factors responsible for the failure of the Army to cohere under combat stress in Vietnam was the failure of its officer corps to provide the kind of leadership necessary in a combat army" (Gabriel & Savage, 1978:9).

V. Primary Groups and Combat Violence

Primary group ties in the combat unit are not a given. They must be created by soldiers and their leaders. Ideally, these ties must also be reinforced by administrative policies that support rather than undermine unit cohesion. Nor do primary groups automatically promote effective combat performance (see Shibutani, 1978). These groups are given direction by beliefs about public support for any given war as a legitimate or illegitimate enterprise (Moskos, 1980). Units marked by primary group ties and guided by a sense of military and national purpose are likely to hold together under combat stress. Men are loyal to one another and stand their ground. These are courageous, honorable, and useful military activities. Holding the line in the face of enemy fire is an integral part of any military campaign.

Firing one's weapon during combat, however, appears to be a more difficult undertaking. Whereas most men perservere out of loyalty to their primary group (and ultimately to the Army and the nation), only a minority of soldiers armed with individual weapons (primarily rifles) fire their weapons and generally advance the line of combat. That "war is the business of killing... is the simplest truth in the book" (Marshall, 1947:67), but there has been a widespread and persistent unwillingness among infantry soldiers to fire their weapons and thereby kill the enemy.

The soldier who marches into combat but will not shoot his weapon is a martial paradox of long standing. Karsten reports

that

> "at Gettysburg over 18,000 muskets were found on the battlefield with unmistakable evidence that their owners had not fired them at anyone that day; 12,000 of them had two charges, neither of which had been discharged, rammed down the barrel; 6,000 more had from three to ten such charges, and another had no fewer than twenty-three charges! Some men had probably simply panicked and were loading their weapons purposelessly. But others were probably loading quite deliberately, in order to give the <u>appearance</u> that they were firing. Stonewall Jackson once complained that some of the more religiously inclined of his troops were reluctant to fire on the enemy, and when finally prevailed upon to shoot, were not likely to take correct aim" (Karsten, 1978:25-6).

The phenomenon of non-shooting infantrymen predates Stonewall Jackson's time, but it was not carefully studied until World War II. Marshall (1947:57), a military man and a social scientist, interviewed soldiers in the European Theater over a number of years and reached the following conclusion:

> "The thing is simply this, that out of an average one hundred men along the line of fire during the period of an encounter, only fifteen men on the average would take any part with the weapons. This was true whether the action was spread over a day, or two days, or three. The prolonging of the engagement did not add appreciably to the numbers... Moreover, the man did not have to maintain fire to be counted among the active firers. If he had so much as fired a rifle once or twice, though not aiming it at anything in particular, or lobbed a grenade roughly in the direction of the enemy, he was scored on the positive side."

The following vignette provides powerful testimony to Marshall's (1947:72) conclusion:

> "In the attack along the Carentan Causeway during the night of June 10, 1944, one battalion of the 502nd Parachute Infantry was strung out along a narrow defile which was totally devoid of cover and where throughout the night the men were fully exposed to enemy bullet-fire from positions along a low ridge directly

> in front of them. The ridge was wholly within their view and running off at a slight angle from the line of advance of the column, so that the Americans were strung out anywhere from 300 to 700 yards from the enemy fire positions.
>
> In this situation the commander...was able to keep moving up and down along the column despite a harassing fire, and observe the attitude of all riflemen and weapons men. This was his testimony, given in the presence of the assembled battalion: 'I found no way to make them continue fire. Not one man in twenty-five voluntarily used his weapon. There was no cover; they could not dig in. Therefore their only protection was to continue a fire which would make the enemy keep his head down. They had been taught this principle in training. They all know it very well. But they could not force themselves to act upon it. When I ordered the men who were right around me to fire, they did so. But the moment I passed on, they quit. I walked up and down the line yelling, 'God damn it! Start shooting!' But it did little good. They fired only while I watched them or while some other officer stood over them.'"

Perhaps more striking still, "There were some men in the positions directly under attack who did not fire at all or attempt to use a weapon even when the position was being overrun" (Marshall, 1947:56). One can hardly fault Marshall for concluding that "The rarest thing in all battle is fire in good volume, accurately delivered and steadily maintained" (1947:66), or for claiming that "Prince Hohenlohe was profoundly right when he said: "It is proof of a superior military instruction if in battle the men only bring their rifles up to their shoulders to fire" (1947:74).

What inhibits the combat soldier, placing him and his comrades' lives in jeopardy? Partly it is the alien nature of infantry combat, which may disrupt primary groups and leave soldiers feeling alone and disoriented. "In the infantry," state Janowitz and Little (1965:91),

> "the group structure is strained under the impact of enemy firepower. The failure of a high proportion of infantry soldiers to use their weapons in combat is partly due to this breakdown of communications. The soldier is confronted by a strange situation in which he feels completely on his own."

It is often true, as well, that targets in combat "are not comparable to the targets to which [the infantry soldier] has been conditioned to fire," and that the foresaightful combat soldier must bear in mind "the necessity for calculating the value of present targets as compared to possible future targets and the need to conserve an ammunition supply" (Janowitz & Little, 1965:91).

Certainly fear freezes the trigger finger of many soldiers. It is hard to do justice to the impact of fear upon a soldier's performance. The statistics on this matter, however, are stark and compelling. During World War II, for instance, we learned that

> "In one infantry division in France in August 1944, 65 percent of the soldiers admitted that they had been unable to do their jobs properly because of extreme fear on at least one occasion, and over two fifths said it had happened repeatly... In another U.S. infantry division in the South Pacific, over two thousand soldiers were asked about the physical symptoms of fear: 84 percent said they had a violent pounding of the heart, and over three fifths said they shook or trembled all over. Around half admitted to feeling faint, breaking out in a cold sweat, and feeling sick to their stomachs. Over a quarter said they had vomited, and 21 percent said they had lost control of their bowels. These figures are based only on voluntary admissions, of course, and the true ones are probably higher in all categories, especially the more embarassing ones" (Dyer, 1985:142).

These grim statistics remind us -- and those of us who have never

seen a battlefield need reminding -- that the common refrain among combat troops about being "'scared shitless' was not just a colorful expression" (Dyer, 1985:142). Comparable figures are available for the Vietnam War (see Watson, 1978).

The soldier who panics is unable to fire. Fear may also encourage a man to lay low: he refuses to fire to avoid drawing attention to himself (Janowitz & Little, 1965:91). Combat fatigue, a euphemism for psychiatric breakdowns, is a corollary of intense and persistent fear; it, too, may demoralize a man and weaken his will to fight. But most of the men Marshall observed -- and particularly the men involved in the Carentan Causeway incident described above -- were not in panic and had little to gain from laying low. Nor were they noticeably fatigued. Their targets were reasonably comparable to any training target, and ammunition was in good supply. These soldiers quite bravely stood their ground. They simply refused to fire their weapons.

The reason men in such circumstances refuse to fire, Karsten (1978:26) suggests, is "the Judeo-Christian rule against the willful taking of human life." Marshall makes a similar observation. In his words, the American soldier

> "is what his home, his religion, his schooling, and the moral code and ideals of his society have made him. The Army cannot unmake him. It must reckon with the fact that he comes from a civilization in which aggression, connected with the taking of life, is prohibited and unacceptable. The teaching and the ideals of that civilization are against killing, against taking advantage. The fear of aggression has been expressed to him so strongly and absorbed by him so deeply and prevadingly -- practically with his mother's milk -- that it is part of the normal man's emotional make-up. It stays his trigger finger even though he is hardly conscious that it is a restraint

upon him. Because it is an emotional and not an intellectual handicap, it is not removable by intellectual reasoning, such as: 'Kill or be killed'" (Marshall, 1947:78).

The source of the inhibition against killing in combat goes deeper, I believe, than either Karsten or Marshall contend. Combat killing is quite unnatural for any civilized person. This is true whether one subscribes to the Judeo-Christian ethic or any other ethic. Aggression may come naturally to man under a fairly wide range of adverse circumstances, but soldiers are typically called upon, in the words of one Civil War veteran, to carry out "the killing of strangers against whom you feel no personal animosity" (Karsten, 1978:197). Such killing has no biological survival value and is not a part of our adaptive heritage. (Such killing may come naturally for the psychopath and be easily inculcated in aggressive and authoritarian types, but that is what makes them *different* from the rest of us.) We are, by nature, more likely to respond with empathy for others and concern (mediated by conscience) about right conduct. Such concerns were uppermost in the minds of our Civil War soldier on the occasion of his killing of an enemy soldier:

> "When we got to him the moon revealed him distinctly. He was lying on his back, with his arms abroad; his mouth was open and his chest heaving with long gasps, and his white shirt-front was all splashed with blood. The thought shot through me that I was a murderer; that I had killed a man -- a man who had never done me any harm. That was the coldest sensation that ever went through my marrow. I was down by him in a moment, helplessly stroking his forehead; and I would have given anything then -- my own life freely -- to make him again what he had been five minutes before. And all the boys seemed to be feeling in the same way; they hung over him, full of pitying interest, and tried all

> they could to help him, and said all sorts of regretful things. They had forgotten all about the enemy; they thought only of this one forlorn unit of the foe. Once my imagination persuaded me that the dying man gave me a reproachful look out of his shadowy eyes, and it seemed to me that I would rather he had stabbed me than done that. He muttered and mumbled like a dreamer in his sleep about his wife and his child; and I thought with a new despair, 'This thing that I have done does not end with him; it falls upon <u>them</u> too, and they never did me any harm, any more than he...' The thought of him got to preying upon me every night; I could not get rid of it. I could not drive it away, the taking of that unoffending life seemed such a wanton thing. And it seemed an epitome of war; that all war must be just that -- the killing of strangers against whom you feel no personal animosity; strangers whom, in other circumstances, you would help if you found them in trouble, and who would help you if you needed it" (Karsten, 1978:196-7).

Comparable testimony is provided by a World War II veteran -- a Marine who went on to kill more enemy soldiers but could never quite get used to it:

> "You think about it and you know you're going to have to kill but you don't understand the implications of that, because in the society in which you've lived murder is the most heinous of crimes... and you are in a situation in which it's turned the other way round... When you actually kill someone the experience, my experience, was one of revulsion and disgust.
>
> I was utterly terrified -- petrified -- but I knew there had to be a Japanese sniper in a small fishing shack near the shore. He was firing in the other direction at Marines in another battalion, but I knew as soon as he picked off the people there -- there was a window on our side -- that he would start picking us off. And there was nobody else to go... and so I ran towards the shack and broke in and found myself in an empty room.
>
> There was a door which meant there was another room and the sniper was in that -- and I just broke that down. I was just absolutely gripped by the fear that this man would expect me and would shoot me. But as it turned out he was in a sniper harness and he couldn't turn around fast enough. He was entangled in the harness so I shot him with a .45 and I felt remorse and shame. I

> can remember whispering foolishly, 'I'm sorry' and then just throwing up... I threw up all over myself. It was a betrayal of what I'd been taught since a child" (Dyer, 1985:101).

Similar scruples apparently affected some World War II fighter pilots. "The U.S. Air Force discovered during World War II that... the majority of fighter pilots never shot anybody down" (Dyer, 1985:119). The reasons were not technical but psychological and moral. For fighter pilots of this era were called upon to carry out what amounted to face-to-face killings of opposing aviators, without primary group pressures from flight teams to fire their weapons. As Dyer tells us, "these fighter pilots... were almost always in single-seat aircraft and could often see that inside the enemy aircraft was another human being" (Dyer, 1985:119).

Some World War II pilots evidently drew the elementary but significant inference that if the pilots of enemy planes were human beings, so were the enemy citizens upon whom bombs were dropped with regularity. Trained as technicians and then called upon to kill flesh-and-blood people, some aviators were traumatized by guilt:

> "P.P.T. was frightened, but even more, he felt terribly guilty. Every time his plane went up its only purpose was to drop bombs on defenseless people. His job as a gunner was to kill enemy fliers and he did his job. But it seemed all wrong to him. This was contrary to his religion and everything that he had learned prior to entering the Army. He felt that he was guilty of participating in a never ending series of heinous crimes for which his family, his community, and his God must always condemn him. He became jittery, could not sleep, and vomited frequently. Yet he kept going... [Eventually hospitalized,] he poured forth his preoccupations to the doctor: 'There was the raid the

> day before Christmas. We had to go. I didn't want to kill those poor people... I shot down a man, a German. I felt guilty about it. We shouldn't kill people. Here they hang people for that... I guess that is what bothers me most. I killed somebody... I think about that German I shot down. I know it was him or me, but I just can't forget that I saw him blow up. Up to then it was just an airplane. Then I realized that there was a man in the plane... I keep trying to think that it is all behind me, but I can't. I just think about it and get upset. I can't read or go to classes without thinking about it. You have fighters coming at you in bed and you can't do anything about it. I keep dreaming about it. I just can't help it.' The doctor tried to convince him that he had only been doing his duty, but to no avail..." (Karsten, 1978:193).

A less dramatic but equally revealing fact is that "fear of killing, rather than fear of being killed, was the most common cause of battle fatigue in the individual" during World War II (Marshall, 1947:78). The Vietnam war was no different. Karsten reports the words of a Vietnam combat veteran: "Every day I pray for only two things -- to be out of this hell and back home or be killed before I might have to kill someone." In this respect, Karsten (1978:14) maintains, the man was not unique among veterans of Vietnam or, for that matter, any other modern war.

Now there are men who shoot regularly, and there are conditions under which some soldiers shoot to excess and produce slaughters or massacres. A unit that loses a great many valued buddies, particularly if they are killed in some especially arbitrary or gruesome way, may develop what Lifton (1976:55) has called "a survivor mission of atrocity" and try to make the enemy -- or anybody who can pass for the enemy -- pay for those lost lives. Guerilla warfare of the sort waged in Vietnam would seem

to accentuate this problem: the enemy's threat is pervasive, often materializing in the form of land mines of unknown parentage, so one loses buddies without warning and without an enemy upon whom to avenge oneself. The notion that somebody -- anybody -- must pay for this carnage can be quite compelling (Gault, 1971).

Men made to feel insignificant by the often vast scope of the impersonal threats that surround them come increasingly to see as insignificant the lives of those who oppose them (Keegan, 1976:322). Exacting revenge against those enemes one encounters, moreover, would seem to be deceptively easy with today's infantry rifles. As Gault (1971:452-3) makes painfully clear,

> "Long gone are the days when the sharp-shooting musketeer saved his single precious shot until the last possible moment of his individuated enemy's clearly visible approach. Today's rifleman carries a lightweight M-16 that spits in one second ten strangely small bullets at bone-shattering velocity. His technique usually is not to aim it but to get it pointed in the enemy's general direction and discharge thither a torrent of destruction. It serves as a grenade launcher, making every soldier a miniature artilleryman. Terrified and furious teenagers by the tens of thousands have only to twitch their index fingers, and what was a quiet village is suddenly a slaughterhouse."

Older rifles, of the sort used in World War II and Korea, required a more complicated procedure to load, aim and fire. Each shot was a discrete event to which one would have to give mental assent. The necessary deliberation attendant to shooting may have operated as a deterrent both against shooting at all and against massacres.

Though all wars produce their share of gruesome excesses, these tragedies are comparatively rare. Indeed, the perception that the enemy is a hapless stranger, trapped like oneself in a

nightmare war and therefore not a fit candidate for killing, may be more widespread among combat troops than one would at first suppose. Combat in the trenches of World War I, for example, typically proceeded on the basis of an explicit "Live and Let Live" principle.

> "A ritualized and routinized structure of offensive activity emerged on the quiet front. It constituted a level of offensiveness below that defined by military elites as ideal. It was based on the norm of Live and Let Live and maintained by a system of sanctions. In the positive sense, each side rewarded the other with inhibition of offensive activity to a tolerable level. Negatively, deviation from the norm was sanctioned by a return to the maximum and formally prescribed level of offensiveness. Within the respective armies, the 'rate-busters' were restrained by the disapproval of their peers" (Ashworth, 1968:415).

Such a system could only work because "the soldier, after battle experience, defined his foe as a fellow sufferer rather than a fiend" (Ashworth, 1968:418). In one man's words, "Hatred of the enemy, so strenuously fostered in training days, largely faded away in the line. We somehow realized that individually they were very like ourselves, just as fed-up and anxious to be done with it all" (Ashworth, 1968:418). Each army had taught its men that We were the good guys and THEY were the bad. After extended combat experiences in the trenches, "The WE now included the enemy as the fellow sufferer. The THEY became the staff" (Ashworth, 1968:421). Nothing quie this clear cut occurred in World War II or Korea. The lonely and desolate battlefields of these wars appear to fall between the extremes of the trench and the jungle; the combat etiquette appeared to be one of laying low, and advancing and firing on command (see Marshall, 1947).

The generally alien nature of combat killing largely escapes the attention of military officers and other elites who orchestrate wars. Marshall's (1947:79) observations on this matter are revealing.

> "Line commanders pay little attention to the true nature of this mental block. They take it more or less for granted that if the man is put on such easy terms with his weapon in training that he 'loves to fire,' this is the main step toward surmounting the general difficulty. But it isn't as easy as that... [T]he average and normally healthy individual -- the man who can endure the mental and physical stresses of combat -- still has such an inner and usually unrealized resistance toward killing a fellow man that he will not of his own volition take life if it is possible to turn away from that responsibility. Though it is improbable that he may ever analyze his own feelings so searchingly as to know what is stopping his own hand, his hand is nonetheless stopped. At the vital point, he becomes a conscientious objector, unknowing. That is something which needs to be analyzed and understood if we are to prevail against it in the interests of battle efficiency."

Promoting greater fire power "in the interests of battle efficiency" is an eminently worthwhile enterprise. Efforts to achieve this goal, stimulated by Marshall's research, identified the profile of the "shooter" or "fighter", and pointed to improved means of training and deploying infantry combat soldiers.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the shooters are all-around good soldiers. Compared to other infantry soldiers, they are bright (though somewhat below the national average in IQ), alert, loyal, responsible, and task-oriented; they are "doers" who characteristically accomplish what they set out to do. They are, as befits a soldier, manly, adventurous, outdoors types yet they are not overly aggressive. They are also physically fit

and athletically inclined, especially to contact sports. They are sociable and popular, partly for the attributes noted above but also, perhaps, because they were raised in homes that valued autonomy and concern for others and hence find it easy to cultivate genuine friendships. Their congenial natures may also reflect the fact that their parents meted out benign punishments, primarily moderate verbal discipline administered by the father. They are likely to be informal group leaders, and their combat performance is marked by stamina and a guiding sense of duty (see Egbert et. al., 1958).

The shooters are an interesting study in contrast with such professional soldiers as the Green Berets. Like the Green Berets, the shooters succeed at combat; they value the excitement and the challenge as well as the team approach required for combat. Unlike the Green Berets, however, they are not cold-blooded technicians who administer violence dispassionately. They fight with more feeling, both for their buddies and for their country. They are not mercenaries, but rather patriotic citizens-in-arms. Whereas the Green Berets may well be an ideal military elite, the shooters would seem to be a more fitting model for the combat infantryman.

Based on the research identifying shooters (known as the "fighter studies"), better classification and assignment of combat soldiers was achieved.

> "By the mid- to late-fifties... the research was paying off in terms of the way men were allocated to combat status... By 1958... any 1000 soldiers would then have consisted of 250 top fighters, 700 adequate fighters and 50 non-fighters -- to the army a significant

improvement" (Watson, 1958:51-2).

The current status of these procedures is unclear. The subject has not been broached in the published military literature over the last two decades.

Training soldiers in what Marshall termed "the habit of fire" makes shooting a rote and impersonal activity. Such training, in turn, makes it easier for the average soldier to fire his weapon and join the ranks of the shooters. "The prime object" of such training is quite simply "to ensure that men will fire when ordered" (Marshall, 1947:81). It was Marshall's view that soldiers must develop "the habit of massing fire whenever ordered and against whatever target may be designated -- the embarkment of a river, the bases of forward trees in a line of woods, or the crest of a hill" (Marshall, 1947:81). Soldiers trained in such fashion for the Korean War evidently fired in greater proportions than their World War II counterparts. Upwards of fifty percent fired on most occasions, and close to perfect firing scores were achieved under some battle conditions (Dyer, 1985).

The habit of fire is readily achieved with complex, team-based weapons systems. Primary group pressures to perform are powerful with these weapons. Training in the use of such advanced weaponry can make performance a matter of habit that transfers to combat situations because training simulates combat situations reasonably well. These weapons are often deployed far from the actual heat of battle. Thus soldiers respond, both in training and in combat, more to images on computer screens than to

the sights and sounds of war (see Harman, 1977:138). With advanced weapons systems and simulation training, killing become a technical and impersonal matter. The forces that promote disiciplined institutional violence -- authorization, isolation, insulation, and dehumanization -- operate reasonably smoothly.

A systems approach can also be employed with infantry soldiers. Riflemen can be deployed in fire teams; these teams can use coordinated fire to improve their functional cohesion and combat efficiency (George, 1967). When leadership is attenuated, as often occurs in battle, peer group pressures and the demands of coordination increase firing and, to some extent, actually replace the role of formal leaders. As George (1967:36) has noted, "increased firepower brought against infantrymen [has] forced them to disperse, thereby rendering leader control difficult." There has also been an "increase in the probability that squads will be required to operate in jungle environments where leader control is rendered still more difficult" (George, 1967:36). In such milieus, "numbers are not great enough to establish front lines in the classic sense" (George, 1967:36). These developments "add up to a real problem in troop control and an increased requirement for light weapons infantrymen who will take the initiative to coordinate their responses to one another when leader control is not available" (George, 1967:36). What is involved is "shifting some of the responsibility for coordination from leaders to the unit members themselves" (George, 1967:44).

The habit of fire makes shooting one's weapon a mechanical act. Combat itself is never mechanical, however, but rather draws

upon primary groups for the motivation essential to combat effectiveness. Thus, training must be embedded in the unit with which a soldier must fight, so there is a link between learning and the officers and buddies one wants to impress and protect (Hartline, 1982). The object of training is "to build up [the soldiers'] confidence as individuals and as a group" (Dyer, 1985:114), and to promote the "instinctive, selfless reactions and the fierce group loyalty the recruits will need if they ever see combat" (Dyer, 1985:115). One such reaction is really a predisposition -- to close with and kill the enemy (Eisenhart, 1975)). Modern recruit training, unlike the training offered to soldiers in World War II and earlier wars, is filled with explicit talk about killing the enemy rather than merely "doing one's duty as a soldier" (Dyer, 1985:121). This talk is essentially "bloodthirsty but meaningless hyperbole" (Dyer, 1985:121), yet it serves an important purpose: to desensitize soldiers to the horrors of combat killing and hence to make them more able to act decisively -- in particular, to use their weapons -- in combat.

Rote or habituation training methods not only promote predictable performance and professional pride, they also preserve the soldier's personal character. Especially with a systems or team-work emphasis, this type of training bypasses legitimate moral reservations about killing rather than undermining them by indoctrinating men in the business of killing. Soldiers are given specific skills and a compartmentalized notion of morality that allows them to kill in combat without losing their sense of the prohibition against killing in non-combat situations. Life

per se is not devalued, and the justification for combat killing is not a personal but rather an institutional matter. Killing is an institutional perogative; the soldier performs the combat role as the institution's authorized agent.

Operating by habit and rote, the Army aims to mechanize and hence dehumanize combat killing. Neither the soldier nor his enemy -- nor killing per se -- is dehumanized outside of the military context. This point may seem obvious, but it is worth emphasizing because it is of vital moral significance. It is one thing for a soldier to kill because he must, preserving an awareness that combat killing is a necessary evil in an imperfect world that must be done as cleanly and efficiently as possible. It is quite another to believe, as assassins are alledgedly trained to believe, that people -- all people -- are objects to be disposed of at will whether during war or in peace. The soldier kills an enemy; the assassin is his murderer.

To create assassins we must dull our own humanity even as we vanquish our opponents. Susceptible people, particularly those with psychopathic leanings, can be -- and evidently have been -- subjected to "Clockwork Orange training to quell any qualms they may have about killing" (Watson, 1978:249). Here we are talking about killing per se, independent of context and target. Such training is flagrantly immoral, since it glorifies violence as an end in itself and negates the value of innocent human life. It is also impractical. The men so produced are "loose cannons" who may well be beyond military control; presumeably they can be bought by the highest bidder. Besides, military violence is disciplined

violence undertaken for defensible ends. There is no room for psychopaths in this business.

As a practical matter, elite combat troops do not need to be trained as assassins to carry out combat missions. They operate as combat technicians who kill to complete military tasks; the excitement, the challenge, and the military purpose (hence authorization) are sufficient motivation to put their professional military skills to work. An instuctive case in point is the sniper. The sniper has been described as "a special breed..., a sort of latter-day frontiersman at heart, self-sufficient and not overwhelmed by doubts about the propriety of the task at hand -- which is not murder, under combat rules, but uncomfortably akin to it" (Smith, 1986:D1). In the words of one Marine sniper, "We have the capability to watch people die, his head explode or whatever. It's the mark of a true professional to carry out the mission" (Smith, 1986:D1).

The sniper's job is only akin to murder in the sense that it involves a premeditated killing of another specific individual human being. But the sniper only kills during war, and the person he kills is always an enemy soldier. The Marine quoted above is right in claiming that the sniper is a true military professional. The sniper's capacity to stalk and kill and "watch people die" -- not any people but always an enemy soldier -- is the result of military training and discipline in service of authorized military objectives. The sniper is not brainwashed or indoctrinated in the joys of violence. Indeed, as indicated by the commander of the Marine Corps snipers' school, even with carefully selected and

extensively trained soldiers, there is still the problem of lingering reservations about the taking of human life. "There's one thing we don't know [about a sniper who has another human being in his gunsights:] We don't know if he'll pull the trigger" (Smith, 1986:D1).

Regular infantry soldiers, it almost goes without saying, will not respond to assassin training at all. They will find it morally repugnant; they fight for buddies and for patriotism, not even specifically to kill enemies let alone to kill for killing's sake. It bears remembering that infantry "fighters" are not trained killers but simply loyal troopers who do their best to carry out their duty. Even were it feasible and tactically desirable to convert some of our rank-and-file soldiers into assassins, any such military advantage would be purchased at great cost. The soldier so trained must forsake his most cherished values about the inherent worth of human life. In effect, he is asked to risk not only his life but his character for the country he holds dear. That some soldiers may be willing to make this sacrifice does not change the fact that any such demands placed upon them are illegitimate.

The key issues facing the Army now as it tries to build an effective combat force are not in the areas of selection of personnel or even in their training. The "fighter studies" have told us what we need to know about who makes a good infantry soldier; the wisdom of basic and advanced individual training, especially when applied to weapons-systems and coordinated fire, are adequate to equip motivated men for the task of combat. What

is needed now is to capitalize on the pschological context in which the typical soldier operates, that is, on the primary group with whom and for whom he fights.

VI. Implications for Policy and Research

Though primary groups are an essential ingredient of an effective combat infantry, at least since World War II they have not been a high priority of the American military. "The American military establishment," according to Janowitz and Little (1965:82), "appears to be a 'mass-produced' institution in which little effort is made to build on previous loyalties or to maintain organizational continuity." The shortcomings of our combat infantry forces, noted at the outset of this report, stem in large measure from this impersonal, "mass produced" character of our Army.

Too often, the value of primary groups in particular and human relations in general is ruined by bureaucratic policies which treat soldiers like commodities. In Marshall's (1947:155-6) words,

> "those whose task it was to shape personnel policy have tended to deal with man power as if it were motor lubricants or sacks of potatoes. They have destroyed the name and tradition of old and honored regiments with the stroke of a pen, for convenience's sake. They have uprooted names and numbers which had identity with a certain soil and moved them willy-nilly to another soil. They have moved men around as if they were pegs and nothing counted but a specialist classification

> number. They have become fillers-of-holes rather than architects of the human spirit."

To be sure, bureaucratic policies are efficient and cost-effective in the short run. It may be cheaper to disband some units and regroup others rather than to preserve established (and proven) units. It may be easier to train soldiers in specialized centers and then disperse them individually to units as vacancies appear, rather than to train and deploy men in stable groups. But such policies traffic in false econony. For they purchase monetary savings at the expense of the vital human ties that bind soldiers together as a military force, and hence they kill off the morale and fighting spirit essential to victory in battle.

It is imperative that we remember, as Marshall (1947:209) so vividly reminds us, that

> "the great victories of the United States have pivoted on the acts of courage and intelligence of a very few individuals. The time always comes in battle when the decisions of statesmen and of generals can no longer affect the issue and when it is not within the power of our national wealth to change the balance decisively. Victory is never achieved prior to that point; it can be won only after the battle has been delivered into the hands of men who move in imminent danger of death. I think we in the United States need to consider well that point, for we have made a habit of believing that national security lies at the end of a production line."

The basic issues relating to combat effectiveness are always human issues. Always, says Marshall (1947:211), "one man must go ahead so that a nation may live." That man risks his life first and foremost for the respect and affection of his military primary group, and only secondarily for the good of the larger military

and national purpose that group ultimately serves and makes personally meaningful to him. Without binding primary groups, men do not go ahead into the dangers of battle, and nations -- as entities soldier feel a kinship with -- do not live.

Sustaining primary group bonds in the face of the military bureaucracy has always been difficult. Added problems are created by the volunteer army. Sadly, "the Army may be getting a disporportionate share of the more alienated members of this 'alienated generation'" (Hauser, 1980:202). Such recruits are apathetic, lacking "the respect for our national institutions which is the basis for military professionalism" (Hauser, 1980:202). As a result, there "is a lack of commitment on the part of many of today's soldiers to either the values or the worth of the society from which they come, a circumstance which augurs ill for their willingness to take risks in battle on its behalf" (Sorely, 1980:88). That we promise volunteers a career in the Army rather than a mission in service of their country may further detract from their combat readiness. Men will die for cause and country, but not for salaried positions within corporations.

The volunteer force presents other obstacles to the development of useful military primary groups. This force is, according to both its critics and its admirers, top-heavy with working class and underprivileged recruits. Man for man, they make good soldiers. But a unit needs a mix of personality and social class backgrounds -- a mix which includes some privileged but ambitious and committed types, such as made up the hard core of the Wehrmacht army -- if an adequate supply of natural leaders

is to emerge from the ranks of the primary groups (Fallows, 1981).

The training these soldiers receive has also been criticized as being too civilianized (Hauser, 1980) and even genteel (Fallows, 1981), diluting further the military effectiveness of the contemporary army. Hauser (1980) tells us that training as habituation, in which one acquires the habit of fire and other combat reflexes, has become a lost art in today's volunteer army. Esprit de corps, too, has suffered. Loyalty, formerly "built on the countless intangible bonds among men who ate, slept, worked, and drank together," simply "does not grow among men who knock off for the day and drive home to the wife and kids" (Fallow, 1981:100). Pride is yet another casualty of the volunteer force. In Hauser's (1980:194) words, "the young man whose major reason for enlistment (admitted or not) was his failure to find gainful employment elsewhere is not likely to be bursting with a sense of self-worth." It is quite understandable that, in Fallow's (1981:98) words, "many thoughtful, careful military leaders say that the conditions of service in today's Army undermine the unique qualities a fighting force must possess."

Research on morale among voluntary army soldiers bears out the critics' concerns. In one study it was revealed, for instance, that the infantry battalion "disliked the Army the most" (Brown & Moskos, 1976:12) and "only 19 percent of tank and infantry battalions agreed with the statement they would trust their fellows in combat" (Brown & Moskos, 1976:14). This study also indicated that, in general, people's best friends are not

fellow soldiers. In the authors' words, "the long-term erosion in Army primary groups since World War II seems borne out by this finding" (Brown & Moskos, 1976:13). Nor were soldiers knowledgeable about their country or its military commitments. Though Moskos and Brown claim to have uncovered "a profound reservoir of patriotism among today's combat soldiers" (Brown & Moskos, 1976:13), it was not connected in any meaningful way to primary groups or our current miltary and national agenda. . It is therefore wishfull (even if entirely forgiveable) thinking, in my view, to conclude that "the transition to the volunteer Army has been generally successful... beneath the common veneer of cynicism lies a good soldier with a fundamental willingness to serve his country in the ultimate test of combat" (Brown & Moskos, 1976:16). Beneath that cynicism no doubt lies a potentially good soldier. But to reach that potential, he must be mobilized in units of people about whom he cares, and deployed in the service of a military and national agenda he understands and embraces.

Given the problems facing our contemporary army, three areas of reform suggest themselves: (1) civic education that promotes an awareness of distinctive military and national concerns (for a primer on this topic, see Janowitz and Wesbrook, 1982); (2) training that promotes habitual performance and builds esprit de corps; and (3) unitization, which is to say, the training and deployment of personnel (including officers) in stable units.

Each of these suggestions could form the basis of a separate report. To my knowledge, there has never been a serious

effort to make civic education come alive in the military. Rigorous and team-building training was regularly achieved prior to the advent of the volunteer army, though its value was often reduced by the dispersal of trainees to units with whom they had no identity. To reinvigorate training regimes would mean reversing many of the changes produced by the civilianization of the army. The final recommendation -- stable unit-based training and deployment -- is crucial. Unitization allows us to capitalize on the human ties that convert military skills and patriotic beliefs into sources of motivation for the combat soldier. Accordingly, this report closes with a discussion of the feasibility unitization and a research agenda which will support it.

Unitization of fighting forces is an old idea, most notably associated with the "regimental mystique" of the British Army. While those regiments may reflect a time long past, there are lessons that can be drawn from them. Hauser's (1980:193) remarks on this subject are instructive:

> "It is doubtful that the U.S. Army could ever achieve the regimental mystique so nostalgically (and perhaps romatically) remembered by the British. The society which produced those regiments was one of relative stability, of sharp social stratification, and of respect (enforced if not universally felt) for such institutions as Church, Crown, and Empire. Today's American society is characterized by rapid technological change, social mobility, and a widespread skepticism toward institutions of all kinds. Still, there is probably something to be gained, and surely little to be lost, by certain inexpensive measures to enhance unit loyalty: unit-distinctive items of uniform (berets, belt-buckles, scarves, boots, etc.), bands (which can, as of old, double as wartime stretcherbearers), and ceremonies."

In Hauser's view, more substantial reforms along these lines are also both possible and desirable. To build cohesion and combat readiness, Hauser advocates that the Army "replace its system of individual rotation with one of unit rotation" (Hauser, 1980:205). In making this recommendation, Hauser is mindful of the logistical difficulties. "A system of unit rotation would require that the rotating organization be at a logistically manageable echelon such as the battalion, that all members of combat arms battalions be deployable... and that the system be adopted Army-wide rather then experimentally" (Hauser, 1980:205). Manpower levels would be reduced (currently, there are nondeployable personnel in Army units), leading Hauser (1980:205) to suggest "the establishment of fewer units or of explicitly different readiness categories of units." A corollary reform relates to officer assignments. To promote effective unit leadership, Hauser (1980:205) suggests that the Army "extend the tenure for commanders and key staff officers... to three or even four" years. Such assignments will promote the type of leadership that is essential for combat performance as distinct from organizational management.

These reforms are expensive, but Hauser (1980:193-4) contends that they "might well prove upon objective appraisal to buy readiness gains far exceeding their cost." However, to appreciate the value of unitization of troops and leaders and to appraise it objectively, "military leaders must recognize that their own career-developed identification with the Army as a whole is not matched by their soldiers' more limited

perspective" (Hauser, 1980:194). Soldiers, unlike military leaders, experience the army as an extension of their primary group associations. Hence, "The Army would be doing well if it could improve the soldier's natural loyalty to his buddies and to his small unit (company or, at most, battalion) which comprises the environment he can see" (Hauser, 1980:194).

Wesbrook vigorously supports Hauser's main points. In no uncertain terms, Wesbrook contends that without primary group loyalties buttressing larger commitments to the military and the nation, the prospect of military disintegration under the stress of combat is very real indeed. Moreover, "Even if this involvement exists, soldiers must also perceive the demands of the political and military hierarchy to be legitimate and accept the legitimacy of the hierarchy itself" (Wesbrook, 1980:274).

Moral involvements with one's unit, the military, and the country can be measured and steps can be taken to build commitment. To date, however, "The military establishment is so overly concerned with the instrumental factors of war that it frequently neglects the moral factors; it emphasizes the capacity to fight rather than the will to fight" (Wesbrook, 1980:274). There is no more compelling proof of this than in the Army's preoccupation with statistics on weapons and formal training as indicators of combat readiness. Not since World War II has the Army examined systematically the status of its primary groups. Thus the Army does not know:

- whether soldiers trust and like each other,
- whether they have pride in their units and believe

their units would support them in battle,

*whether they respect and trust their officers and political leaders,

*whether they know or believe in what they are preparing to fight for,

*or whether they have an underlying commitment to the worth of the larger sociopolitical system (Wesbrook, 1980:274-5)

Research on these dimensions of military primary groups would serve basic and applied purposes. Our knowledge of soldiering would be increased, and we would be in a better position to formulate policies that promote effective combat performance.

VII. Notes and References

Notes:

1. Hastings quotes a U.S. First Army report pertaining to the Normandy campaign as follows:

> "It is essential that infantry in training be imbued with a bold, aggressive attitude. Many units do not acquire this attitude until long after their entry into combat, and some never acquire it... The average infantry soldier places too much reliance upon the supporting artillery to drive the enemy from positions opposing his advance..."

General Mark Clark, writing in 1944, is quoted to the following effect: "Without question our training has not yet produced disciplined officers and disciplined men." It is Hastings' contention that "to the very end -- considering the mass of the army rather than only such justly celebrated divisions as the 1st,

4th, 9th and Airborne -- American infantry fieldcraft, tactical skill and above all leadership left much to be desired." He contends, further, that "The shortcomings of American infantry in World War II were repeated in Korea, and in Vietnam." To the extent that we have been insulated from the consequences of these shortcomings, the reasons have been a surplus of manpower, technology, and money. (See Hastings, 1985:C4.)

2. Section II of this report is adapted from Johnson (1986).

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